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The school superintendent describes the process of integration in the White Plains, New York, schools and reports on some findings of a before and after study of achievement. The racial balance plan, achieved by busing inner city Negro children to formerly all-white schools, has not had an adverse effect on the academic achievement of white students, nor has it led to a white middle class exodus. The Negro students "tend" to achieve at a higher level. Most parents and teachers are willing to support the racial balance plan and teachers are learning to work out the problems involved in heterogeneous classrooms. School integration was helped by a generally favorable social climate, and especially by the active, positive, stand of the school board and the female opinion and status leaders in the city. Community acceptance was also gained by the positions of the PTA, the newspaper, the city officials, and consultants. During the summer of 1964, school personnel were prepared for the advent of integration in September. It is felt that the Board erred by failing to actively involve the faculty in the preparation of plans to implement the resolution on racial balance. (See also ED 018 486). (NH)

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SCHOOL MANAGEMENT
JANUARY 1968
Vol. 12, No. 1

ED0 24701

A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

ACHIEVING RACIAL BALANCE

THE WHITE PLAINS STORY

■ ■ ■ Busing students to achieve racial balance is not considered quite as radical today as it was just three or four years ago. But "busing" is still one of the dirtiest words in the educational lexicon.

Clearly, busing would help to solve *de facto* segregation in many communities. Yet, you must scour the nation to uncover just a handful of districts that have drawn up integration programs which incorporate busing.

The main arguments usually thrown up to oppose such programs are:

■ Busing is too expensive. Money is better spent on special services for segregated schools.

■ Busing is unfair to students (almost always colored) who are passengers. These youngsters—and their parents—want and need the security of a neighborhood school, just as white children and parents do. Furthermore, the time these youngsters spend on buses detracts from time spent in the classroom.

■ Busing is harmful to children in *receiving* schools (almost always white middle-class youngsters). The educational standards of these schools must be lowered to accommodate colored children. Also, teachers in these schools—accustomed to dealing with the white middle-class youngster—are ill-prepared to work with the underprivileged child.

Until recently, it has not been possible to refute these arguments—no matter how supercilious they seem on the surface—with *facts*.

Now, it is possible, thanks to a three-year study of integration in White Plains N.Y., where busing has been employed to achieve racial balance in the elementary schools.

Taking a strong hand

The White Plains school district was among the first in the nation to *do* something about *de facto* school segregation.

In April, 1964, the school board adopted a racial balance policy. The policy stated that no school in the community should have more than approximately 30%, or less than approximately 10%, Negro enrollment.

The policy was implemented in September, 1964, just four months after its adoption.

Part of the implementation process involved setting up a careful study of the effects of busing and integration on academic achievement. Now, three years later, the results of that study have been compiled, analysed and released for public examination.

While White Plains administrators do not claim to know all of the answers, they do have heartening evidence of progress in pupil achievement, teacher involvement and community acceptance.

The following report sums up the results of the study and, more important, analyses the administration of this pioneer project—the shortcomings as well as the successes—since its inception. It has been prepared exclusively for SCHOOL MANAGEMENT by White Plains Superintendent Carroll F. Johnson, with the assistance of Mrs. JoAn Booth.

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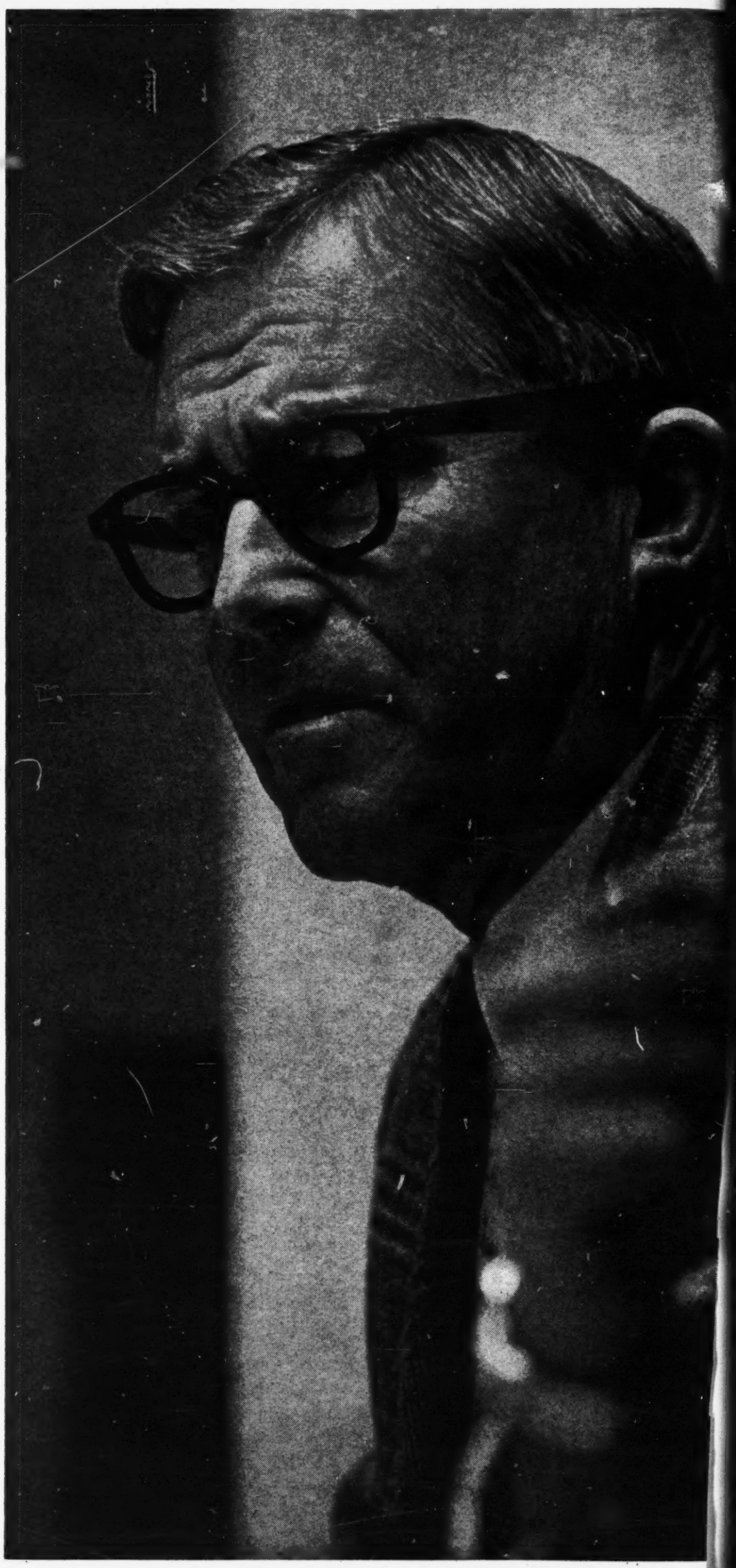
"If school integration is ever to move forward on a broad front, white parents must be convinced that their children will not suffer. We believe we can offer them this assurance."

CARROLL JOHNSON



■ Academic achievement of white pupils has not been adversely affected by the White Plains racial balance plan. White pupils in four neighborhood elementary schools included in a special study—schools which had been all or mostly white before 1964—are now doing as well as, and at some reference points better than, comparable groups of white children did in these same schools prior to integration.

■ More Negro children are making greater academic progress under the racial balance plan than comparable groups of center city children made before the schools were integrated. A predominantly Negro (90%) group of pupils from the center city area were in third grade when integration was instituted in 1964. Tested then, and again at fifth grade in 1966, 45% made at least two years of progress during that two-year period in one or more test areas (word meaning, paragraph meaning, arithmetic reasoning and arithmetic computation). By contrast, only 25% of a previously studied, comparable group of center city children made that much progress between third grade (1960) and fifth grade (1962).

■ Only 15% of the post-integration group failed to make at least 1.5 years of progress in any of the four test areas during the two-year period. Thirty-three per cent of the *pre*-integration group, however, made *less* than 1.5 years of progress between third and fifth grade

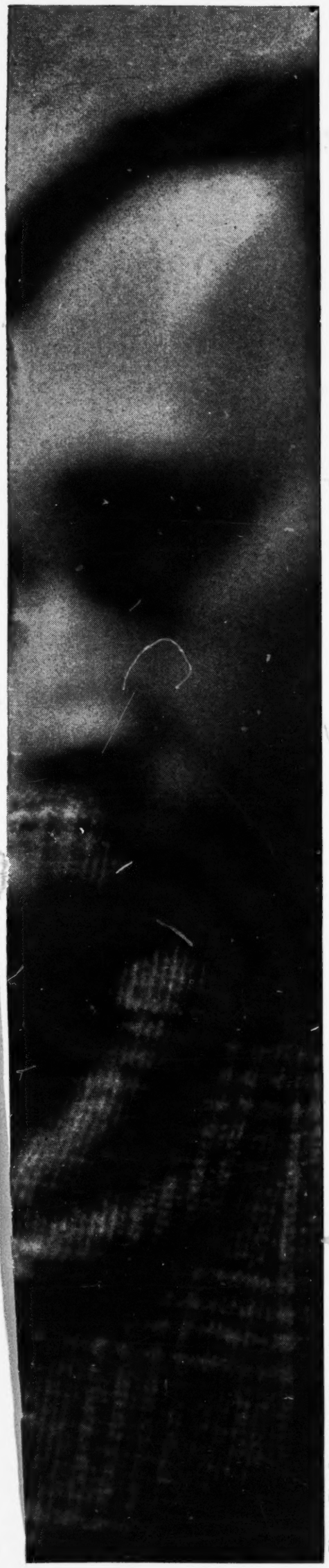


Photo: The Reporter Dispatch

in a segregated situation. Center city children who were in first grade in 1964, when integration was instituted, have done even better.

Briefly, those are the results of our study of integration in White Plains. The study is limited and we know it. We focused only on "before" and "after" achievement (using third- and fifth-grade Stanford Achievement Tests) of 1) white children attending integrated schools which were previously all or mostly white, and 2) children in a predominantly Negro group that previously attended school in the center city.

However, the study results clearly indicate that the effect of our racial balance plan generally has not been negative and, in specific instances, has definitely been positive.

This is why we think our experience shows that integration—and, yes, integration through busing—helps close the traditional gap between disadvantaged Negro pupils and middle-class white students. Negro youngsters tend to achieve at a higher level. White children are not penalized or held back and may, in fact, benefit academically.

But we have also found, aside from our study on academic achievement, that:

- There has been no flight of middle-class white families.
- The majority of parents and teachers find both positive and negative aspects to integration, but are willing to support it.
- Teachers are becoming increasingly involved in working out solutions to the problems which arise in heterogeneous classrooms.

But to really understand why we instituted the racial balance plan, to fully appreciate the results of our study and to understand the implications of our experience, you should know something of the events which preceded our school board's April 1, 1964 policy decision.

Partial remedies, employed periodically between 1956 and 1964, simply had not been effective in combating *de facto* segregation. Some schools remained virtually all-white, while Negro enrollments mounted in others, especially at Rochambeau elementary school in the center city, where Negroes constituted 62% of the student body by the spring of 1964.

Piecemeal efforts don't work

Board and administration had grappled for years with this problem, which stemmed, as is usually the case, from housing patterns. Nineteen per cent of all elementary pupils, and 17% of our 8,700 K-12 students, are Negro.

We had repeatedly changed school building attendance areas for the 11 elementary schools. We constructed a new elementary school on the edge of the downtown area to replace an older facility, locating the new building so as to draw from predominantly white *and* predominantly Negro areas. We built a new all-city senior high for grades 10-12, rather than a second high school to supplement the one we already had. When that school opened in 1960, we relocated one of the three junior high schools.

But by 1964, racial imbalance persisted at the elementary levels and was growing worse. The time had come to dispense with piecemeal efforts and adopt a city-wide policy which would put an end, once and for all, to the creeping threat of *de facto* segregation.

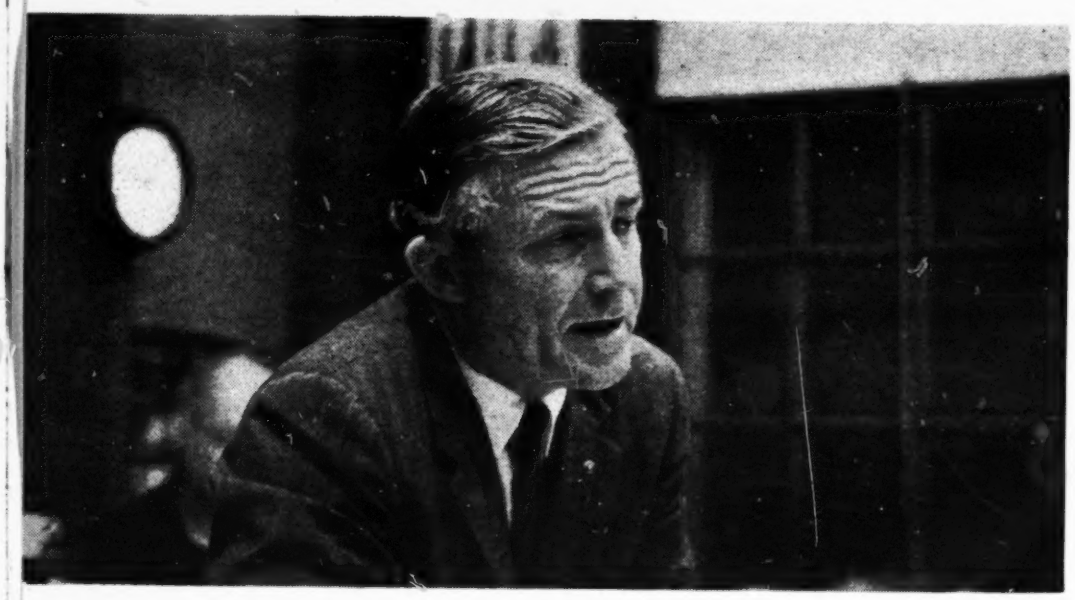
A bumpy road

The road to full integration of the White Plains schools, therefore, has been long and seldom smooth. And although the school board and administration have been struggling with this problem since 1956, I do not believe that we could have solved it even one year sooner than we did: "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

Our tide was taken in April,

1964, with the board's policy resolution.

To translate that resolution into reality, it was necessary to close Rochambeau school and to distribute its 500 pupils among the other 10 elementary schools. To accomplish this, we had to institute busing for some 300 youngsters and reassign 20% of our 4,500 elementary pupils. The new transportation policy covered children who lived



more than 1.5 miles from the school to which they were assigned.

Under New York state education law, we were required to provide the same bus service for private and parochial pupils living that distance from their schools. This increased to 500 the number of pupils to be transported. While it undoubtedly made the integration plan attractive to parents of private and parochial school students, it also added a new cost to our school budget at a time when we had failed to achieve a passing vote, in two referenda, to raise the legal tax ceiling on the operating (non-capital) portion of the school budget.

Residents who were unalterably opposed to any change in the *status quo* were shocked by a proposed expenditure of some $49,500 for school busing, especially since they saw the balance plan as a dire threat to the neighborhood school concept. But this year, 1967-68, we are busing 290 public school pupils and 217 parochial and private school pupils (grades K-6) at a budgeted cost of $69,500. This includes half the salary of the person who acts as combination purchasing agent and transportation supervisor. Busing is by contract with commercial carriers; the longest ride for any pupil is 15 to 20 minutes.

Looking back to 1964, we see that a number of factors were working for us; the tide was generally in our favor at that particular moment. But we also see some things we should have done that we did not do.

On our side:

■ National and state pressure for action to abolish *de facto,* as well as *de jure,* segregation had become intense. The example of demonstrations and riots in other communities was not lost on the residents of White Plains. The community was relieved that it had escaped anything of the sort and was receptive to any program that would prevent civil and social disorder.

■ Many residents had become increasingly uneasy about *de facto* housing segregation in White Plains. There had been spirited community discussion of the relative merits of "scatter" versus "high rise" facilities when public housing projects were being planned for a renewal area. Scatter housing did not prove politically feasible at that time. But the debate did focus the attention of community leaders on the social problems inherent in housing patterns that concentrate a minority group in center city facilities.

■ A particularly articulate and well-informed group of women—status leaders in the city—was active, not only in the League of Women Voters (LWV) and Council of Community Services, but also in the PTA and the citywide PTA council. They had been scatter housing advocates and, having seen that fail, worked very hard to create a climate of acceptance for the school integration plan. The importance of the overlapping membership of these groups cannot be overlooked—in many communities, PTA groups, LWV and other opinion-molding organizations are composed of different groups of residents.

■ Efforts of administrators and board members to cope with segregation trends over the years had been apparent to all residents, especially to civil rights organizations in White Plains. We had, therefore, earned a "period of grace" and were able to work out a plan without having one forced upon us. Had we delayed much longer, however, this grace period would have expired.

■ Another key to community acceptance: our local daily newspaper. The editor was fully informed, on a "background" basis, of board and administration deliberations during the months preceding the April, 1964 policy adoption. The editor and reporters assigned to the schools were present at many board and administration planning sessions. Consequently, when the time came to explain the racial balance plan to the public, the newspaper had both the information and the perspective to do an accurate and thorough job.

■ Care was also taken to maintain informal communication with the mayor and certain other city officials, so they would understand the direction of the board's thinking, and the reasons for it.

■ There was continuing consultation with the executive council of the Rochambeau school PTA. Thus, these parents—predominently colored—helped shape the plan, instead of having something devised *for* them.

■ We had excellent consultants—Theron Johnson, then with the division of intercultural relations, New York state education department, and Robert Dentler, then of the Institute of Urban Studies, Columbia University.* Their insight into minority group motivation and aspirations enabled us to anticipate the reactions of various groups and helped us avoid many pitfalls.

■ We did not consider abandoning the excellent Rochambeau school building. Rather, part of our plan involved converting the school into a full-time adult education center, where existing, scattered adult courses could be consolidated under one roof. New manpower training and basic education programs could then be developed. This greatly enhanced the acceptability of our racial balance plan.

■ We had ample space in our remaining 10 elementary schools to absorb the center city enrollment.

■ Finally, most relevant was the fact that we could balance racial enrollment percentages in our schools *without removing white children from predominantly white schools and reassigning them to formerly "Negro" facilities.* Cross-busing in White Plains would have been vigorously resisted, even by many parents who truly embrace the concept of integration. Our residents have an above-average educational background and wish, for the most part, to provide equal opportunity for all children—even at some inconvenience to themselves. But I do not believe the majority of white parents would willingly have sent their own youngsters into center city schools.

> **"Our residents wish, for the most part, to provide equal opportunity for all children—even at some inconvenience to themselves. But I do not believe that the majority of white parents would willingly have sent their own youngsters into center city schools."**

Johnson is now with the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of HEW; Dentler is director of the Center for Urban Education in New York City.

Unveiling the plan

Even with all these forces working in our favor, we knew that "selling" the plan to the public at large would be a major undertaking. Any school program that does not have at least acceptance and, at best, support, is almost certain to fail.

We are a fiscally independent city school system. Our five-member elected school board is empowered to adopt annual budgets without putting them to public vote. But we must call referenda for 1) long-term construction bond projects, *and* 2) increased taxing power for the operating portion of the budget. The tax limitation referendum requires a 60% affirmative vote, which is why we had lost two previous referenda, even though we received affirmative majorities each time. We knew that we would soon have to try again. Consequently, *how* we introduced our racial balance plan—and with what effect—were of crucial importance.

When the plan was complete, maps and diagrams were prepared, showing the schools to which pupils would be reassigned and the transportation system that would be provided for K-6 students who lived more than 1.5 miles from school.

We decided to unveil the plan at an invitational meeting of civic leaders. We asked every service, civic, neighborhood and professional organization in town to send representatives. The newspaper was given copies of the maps, charts, diagrams and information well in advance, so that reporters and editors would have the time, and the space, to present a detailed account on the day after the meeting. Naturally, the press was also invited to cover the meeting.

Disclosing details of the plan at such a meeting had the obvious advantage of insuring attendance of most opinion leaders. Moreover, it averted the possibility of an anti-integration claque at the initial presentation. Some organizations, of course, were not in favor of school busing and their representatives were present and free to comment. However—and this is important—only the *official* representatives of each organization were admitted.

On this same evening, it was announced that board members and school officials would be available to speak and to answer questions at any subsequent meeting

of community organizations. A date was also set for an official public hearing on the plan for *all* residents of the community. During the next few weeks, hardly a night or day went by when board members and administrators were not scheduled to appear before some neighborhood or civic group.

After the public hearing, which was well attended, the board set the date when it would meet to take "official action"—that is, adopt the racial balance resolution.

Three weeks elapsed between March 23, when the plan was unveiled, and April 16, when the board met to take action. On that day, opponents of the plan mustered an all-out attack. Letters and telegrams began pouring into the board offices, urging that the plan be dropped.

The PTA and other interested citizens immediately counter-attacked. Proponents of the plan were contacted by telephone and an avalanche of pro-integration telegrams and petitions reached board offices.

That evening, at the board meeting, supporters of the program turned out in force and gave the board a standing ovation when it unanimously adopted the racial balance resolution.

The real work begins

But all that had passed was only prologue. Now, we faced the real job—preparing pupils, teachers and parents. It was April. Two months of school remained. September was too close for comfort.

Our director of pupil personnel, Mrs. Marian Graves, went to work at once, organizing a committee of school psychologists, social workers, speech correctionists and master teachers. This group met regularly until the end of the school term. It tried to anticipate every social and academic problem that might arise and it devised procedures for coping with them. Information about disadvantaged children, gleaned from Project Able—a state-supported enrichment program at the Rochambeau school—was disseminated to all elementary teachers, together with suggestions and recommendations. Plans were made to re-apply the Able funds to all elementary schools in September, thus assuring continuation of some remedial and guidance services for children who needed them.

Through Mrs. Graves' office, a corps of volunteers was organized to assist, as needed, in the various school buildings—for extra reading activity with slow readers, for other work with groups of children under the direction of the classroom teacher.

The Rochambeau principal, Lino C. Fiori, worked closely with principals of the predominately white neighborhood schools that spring, answering questions, providing information about the pupils who would transfer the following fall and arranging for these pupils to visit their "new" schools before the end of the term.

Center city parents were contacted and invited to the annual picnics, outings and family days which the neighborhood schools held toward the end of school.

Mrs. Graves instituted a weekly, one-page mimeographed sheet, "Able cable," which reported on useful materials and techniques. This went to all elementary teachers in the school system beginning in September, 1964.

Don't overlook the secretary

What happens in the front office on the first Monday morning of a new school year can, as any administrator knows, make or break a child's day and sometimes determine the mood of an entire faculty. The hard working school secretary must face dozens of small, often irritating problems—"I left my lunch money at home . . . Didn't bring my registration card . . . tardy excuse . . . absence excuse . . . Because my mother didn't sign it . . . Doesn't have it . . . Said you don't need it anyway . . ." and so on.

To forestall front office tie-ups during that critical opening week of school, all school secretaries were invited to meet over the summer with the superintendent's policy advisory group, composed of building principals, subject area supervisors and administrators with system-wide responsibility. Again, the object was to anticipate problems and work out solutions in advance.

This same advisory group devoted most of its sessions in July and August to final details of transportation, parent information and pupil reception, in preparation for opening day.

Home-school counselor

Mr. Alfred P. Hampton, Negro teacher who was active in many civic groups and well known to center city residents, was appointed home-school counselor, effective August 1, 1964. He immediately began apartment-to-apartment, house-to-house calls in the downtown section, talking with center city parents, answering questions, explaining details of the transportation arrangements, allaying the fear and insecurity which any major change evokes.

Also, that summer, playground directors working for the city recreation commission arranged for "game day exchanges" between a center city playground and an outlying neighborhood school playground. (The city and the school system have a joint working agreement for sharing recreation facilities and some teachers work during the summer months as city recreation directors.)

The PTA continued its work during the summer, too. Each neighborhood school PTA had made a special effort to place at least one center city parent on its board, when annual PTA elections were held in late spring, and contact was maintained through summer committee work. Another beneficial understanding was the "play day" sponsored by each

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neighborhood school PTA. Transportation was arranged for the incoming center city pupils and they were invited to spend the morning at their new school, meet neighborhood pupils, participate in outdoor games and partake of punch and cookies.

As September approached, all parents received letters, explaining exactly where and when their children should board the school bus. Colored "tickets" were enclosed for the children, keyed to match colored number cards which would be displayed on buses.

The big day dawns

Literally at dawn on opening day, all administrators (except principals, who had to be in their own schools) got downtown to the appointed bus loading stations to make sure youngsters were sorted out properly. Each administrator, including the superintendent, rode one of the buses—and continued to do so for several days, until procedures were well established and the children fully confident.

The foundations so painstakingly laid during the spring and summer proved solid: we had no major difficulties, either on opening day or in the first weeks of school.

This is not to say, however, that we didn't—or don't—have problems. We did—and still do. We believe we are solving them. But we have a long way to go before we can claim total success . . . if there *is* such a thing.

Where we erred

In retrospect, one fundamental error was our failure to fully involve the faculty when we were making plans for implementing the board's racial balance resolution.

We should have had special all-faculty conference days to establish guidelines on discipline, for one thing. Frankly, we did not foresee the extent of the day-to-day problems that would arise in applying our normal disciplinary procedures to newly-integrated situations. Many of our teachers were, for the first time, confronted with behavior patterns which differed markedly from the behavior of middle-class white youngsters.

The vernacular speech of children from disadvantaged environments also came as a surprise to many teachers, whose orientation was primarily to middle-class white mores.

Another dilemma was presented by grading and reporting procedures. Certain disadvantaged pupils made evident progress within the marking period, yet still lagged some distance behind the achievement of more privileged youngsters. The question naturally arose: how can you give grades that reward and encourage disadvantaged children without being unfair to youngsters who achieve at a level well above average?

Then there was the tendency of center city youngsters, shy in a new environment, to self-segregate themselves on the playground and in the cafeteria. Some teachers were talented at finding ways to "mix" youngsters in informal situations. Other teachers were less successful.

Teachers have answers

Time has ameliorated some of these problems. But the answers that are being found are being found by *teachers.* We have learned that day-to-day problems in the whole area of human relations cannot be solved by administrative directive. Only the teachers can solve them; and they need planned, regularly scheduled times when they can get together, discuss common problems and share ideas.

It has also been brought home to us very forcefully that teachers must have additional supportive services, and a variety of materials keyed to different ability levels, if they are to teach effectively in classrooms which are socially, economically and racially heterogeneous.

If we could retrace our steps during that fateful spring before integration, we would somehow manage to involve our entire faculty in pre-integration planning. But the teachers are involved now, and the results are fast becoming evident.

Our teachers association last year became among the first in New York State to establish an "equal opportunities in education committee" at the local level. One of its first accomplishments was a day-and-a-half conference last spring, which involved administrators and certain supportive personnel. Problems were candidly aired at this meeting and the collective knowledge and experience of the group were allied to find solutions.

The administration has already approved, and the board has voted funds for, a number of remedial and enrichment programs which were recommended by the teachers as a result of that conference.

The same teacher committee also surveyed faculty opinion last spring, soliciting unsigned answers to these questions: 1) To what extent have you received help in providing for individual differences among children? 2) What are the positive and negative aspects in the education of children which you believe are a result of school integration in White Plains? 3) What suggestions do you have for improving the effectiveness of education for all children in White Plains?

As an outgrowth of the survey findings and the conference, we now have funds for teacher supervision at evening study centers downtown, where youngsters go to do their homework, read, or work on school-related assignments. We have employed a coordinator of volunteers to recruit volunteers and resource people for use in all school buildings, with emphasis on securing, as speakers, the most distinguished Negro and white professionals in Westchester County.

Again as a result of this committee's recommendations, a teacher aide from the center city is being employed in *each* of the 10 ele-

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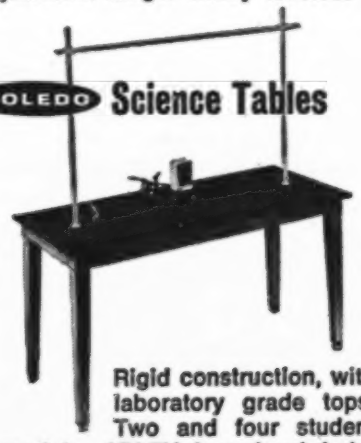

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mentary schools for four hours a day. These aides are assigned to the neighborhood schools to which youngsters from their own center city area are transported, thus enhancing liaison between school and center city residents.

The committee hopes it will soon be possible to establish a small fund in each school building—elementary, junior high and senior high—to facilitate improvement of discipline and human relations.

Also the reporting system and discipline policies are now being reviewed.

Parents and pupils

An opinion questionnaire, sent last spring to all parents of elementary students and to parents of one out of every 10 secondary students, gives good evidence of growing community acceptance. More than a thousand of the 3,300 questionnaires were returned. Thirty-two per cent of the elementary parents saw only positive aspects to integration; 15% saw only negative aspects. Thirty per cent said it had made no difference. The majority (66%) of parents who indicated their children had been in the predominantly Negro Rochambeau school before integration saw only positive aspects.

Among parents of secondary students, 41% of those responding saw only positive aspects, 13% saw only negative aspects, 4% said integration has had both positive and negative aspects and 42% said integration has made no difference.

Although the results of this survey are encouraging, there is still a small but articulate group of citizens in White Plains who adamantly oppose the racial balance plan and the expenditure for busing which makes that plan possible. (Only 56 of the more than 1,000 parents responding to the survey requested that busing be discontinued and that White Plains return to *de facto* segregation.) They have criticized our findings. They maintain that Negro children "actually performed at a significantly lower level of achievement;" this position is contrary to our conclusions, based on all our evidence. This group concedes that "white pupils are achieving as well as they had prior to the implementation of the plan," and says that "busing in Negro children apparently had no adverse educational effect upon the white students." But the group takes the position that "money now unproductively spent for busing children around the city" should be spent, instead, to establish special classes for children who fall below normal achievement.

We do not agree. We believe enrichment and remedial work are necessary; we are providing it and we shall continue to do so. We use substantial federal funds, for example, for a remedial reading center and for remedial reading teachers for each school building—public, private and parochial. We have a summer Head Start program and an elementary and secondary summer school which affords remedial and enrichment services. But we are convinced that integration—where it's possible to integrate the schools—has a very definite impact on the self-respect, self-image and aspiration of youngsters. When a child can hope—when he can dream—then, and not until then, will he begin to set his own goals and move toward them.

Lesson for others

We do not present our plan as a blueprint for all other school systems. We do not claim a magic formula that can produce instant answers for other school districts.

However, at least one finding in White Plains should be reassuring to all school systems: the strong evidence provided by our Stanford Achievement tests that *white children have not been harmed by school integration.*

This statement must be qualified, of course. Our class size is low—approximately 25 maximum in the primary grades and 28 maximum in the intermediate years. And we are working very diligently to find new and better methods of individualizing instruction for every child.

But if integration is ever to move forward on a broad front, in school systems throughout the land, then white middle-class parents must be convinced that their own children will not suffer.

We believe we can offer them this assurance. **End**